ON BECOMING A TEACHER I ONCE NEEDED

by:
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It’s the weekend. I know it’s the end of the week. I see a lot of people passing by our place through the little crack of our shabby window. I hear indistinct chats and laughter of the kids playing nearby. Birds are chirping and dry leaves are running through the sidewalk as the cold wind of February gently blows, creating a calming sound that’s music to my ears. It is the day people await, at least for a majority. For teachers, it’s just a typical day. They have to work; they have to serve.

Piles of paperwork to check and to record are waiting to be finished. As usual, I prepared myself a cup of black coffee to stay awake at least for the next few hours. Going through this tedious loop requires patience and passion. Some days I am full of energy, other days I just exist. But this memory keeps me going every time the feeling of reluctance tries to fill my nerves: the past.

I remember myself shaking at the sight of my teacher’s long wooden stick back in elementary years. The thought that she might call me in an instant during her lectures while holding it always terrified me and made me catch my breath. As soon as I set foot in our classroom, the inexplicable fear would run from my feet up to my completely panic-stricken face. I never looked forward to coming to school during those days. I even told my parents some days that I was not feeling well just to skip school. And I would not be lying and tell you that it was not a relief that they believed such an excuse and not scolded me. But I knew that I could not stay that way. After all, I had to attend my classes or I would fail and hide from the same fear I wanted to get rid of. All over again.
Years later, I met this teacher who, for some reasons, was rather kind and soft-hearted, unlike any other traditional teachers that were feared by most for their intimidating aura. I felt really happy and taught myself that I would not need to run away from school and make lame excuses again to skip classes. I was excited to wake up every morning to go and sit in her class and listen to her words of encouragement. I was no longer afraid to raise questions and participate in class activities. That year marked the beginning of wanting to learn more. Then, I realized that the time I wasted running away from what actually changed my life, and what could potentially change others’ lives as well was as reckless as throwing unused stuff knowing fully that I could have just sold it for money. But those days were long gone.

Today, as I deal with my students whose backgrounds are totally different from that of others from all sides, under my sleeves lies the lesson I learned the hard way: it is not enough to be smart in the field of teaching; what matters more than anything else is a heart that is able to connect with the students regardless of where they come from, no matter who they are. How you treat them and make them feel in your hands are what will stay in their hearts and minds, so less of what you teach them academically.

With these bittersweet memories ingrained deep down in my soul, I promised myself that I would become the teacher I once needed for my students.

References:

Author’s Personal Insight